

Chapter II

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

A. PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

Overview

It is important for colleges to establish a policy on academic integrity that prohibits plagiarism, cheating, and other offenses to the academic integrity of the college. Some institutions establish general definitions of plagiarism, while others set forth policies that contain specific examples of plagiaristic acts. Regardless of the approach, the policy should clearly inform the student that plagiarism is not just copying someone else's text, but that it is a much more inclusive concept involving the misuse of another's work.

Following are examples of policies that employ both general definitions of plagiarism and specific examples of plagiaristic acts.

Sample Policies

- ✓ The term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 1. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;
 2. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
 3. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material before such material is revealed or distributed by the instructor;
 4. the misrepresentation of papers, reports, assignments, or other materials as the product of a student's sole independent effort,

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for the purpose of affecting the student's grade, credit, or status in the university.

5. failing to abide by the instructions of the proctor concerning test-taking procedures; examples include, but are not limited to, talking, laughing, failing to take a seat assignment, failing to adhere to starting and stopping times, or other disruptive activity;
6. influencing, or attempting to influence, any university official, faculty member, graduate student, or employee responsible for processing grades, evaluating students, or for maintaining academic records, through the use of bribery, threats, or any other means of coercion in order to affect a student's grade or evaluation;
7. any forgery, alteration, unauthorized possession, or misuse of university documents pertaining to academic records, including, but not limited to, late or retroactive change of course application forms (otherwise known as "drop slips") and late or retroactive withdrawal application forms. Alteration or misuse of university documents pertaining to academic records by means of computer resources or other equipment also is included within this definition of "cheating."

- ✓ Academic work is evaluated on the assumption that the work presented is the student's own, unless designated otherwise. Anything less is unacceptable and is considered academically dishonest. Specific terms related to academic dishonesty are defined below:

Cheating: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic work submitted for credit.

Plagiarism: Submitting academic work for credit that includes material copied or paraphrased from published or unpublished works without documentation.

Fabrication: Deliberately falsifying or inventing any information or citation in academic work.

Facilitating Academic Dishonesty: Knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate the college's policy on academic dishonesty.

- ✓ Scholars at every level must represent truthfully their findings; that is, they must not tamper with the truth as they see it, and they must not offer as theirs what others discovered or wrote. These are the responsibilities of professor, researcher, and student. Nearly all college students attempt to be honest, but some do not appreciate the extent to which plagiarism is dishonest. It is important to recognize that plagiarism is theft, not of ideas, which are in a sense the property of everyone, but of the credit for originating ideas. Plagiarism is also fraud—intentional deception in order to obtain what does not rightfully belong to one—for students who plagiarize attempt to get from the instructor an unearned grade and from the university an unearned degree. Of course, plagiarists also affront the entire the student body. Plagiarism, finally, is impersonation, since every piece of written work presents an image of its author. Therefore, plagiarism is particularly damaging to the plagiarist; for just as impersonators may get lost among assumed roles, plagiarists will almost certainly have a false understanding of themselves and of the education they are getting.

“Theft,” fraud,” and “impersonation” are harsh words, but they accurately represent the moral status of plagiarism and the severe attitude toward it that prevails. Students who use another’s ideas or language without giving credit violate the most basic agreement between students and the university; they attack the academic enterprise at its heart. If students realize this, they rarely will plagiarize intentionally, unless they are very cynical indeed.

Unfortunately, the proper use of other people’s work is a delicate business, and students sometimes plagiarize without intending to do so. Moreover, education consists almost entirely in the proper use of other people’s ideas, so that what the university asks you to do bears a certain resemblance to what it asks you not to do. Inevitably, and rightly, a large part of what any student can produce comes from books, from instructors, and from other students. Nearly as bad as plagiarism would be a total refusal to be influenced by what other people have written or said. Thus, it is necessary that all students familiarize themselves (if they are not already familiar) with the difference between legitimate and illegitimate borrowings.

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- ✓ Plagiarism is presenting as one's own the writing or research of others. Two common literacy devices are used to avoid plagiarism: quotation marks and footnotes.

Quotation marks must be used to acknowledge all direct (word-for-word) quotations, no matter how short, especially of striking words and phrases. For long quotations (usually four lines or more), indentation of the quoted lines is a standard substitute for quotation marks.

Footnotes or endnotes must be used to acknowledge the source of a direct quotation, unless that source is fully identified in the text of the written work; the source of any borrowed fact, idea, or concept, even though paraphrased; or the source of any copied table, chart, diagram, or other arrangement of facts or statistics. (Paraphrase means "to put entirely in one's own words" not merely to alter a word or two here and there.)

Footnotes or endnote citations are not used when both the idea and its wording come from the student's own mind, as the products of creative thought.

Footnotes are not required when the statement is common knowledge. Common knowledge is to be understood here as those easily verifiable facts available in the experience of educated persons and in a standard desk dictionary (e.g., the birth and death dates of a prominent person cited in a biographical entry in a standard dictionary or encyclopedia). However, common knowledge does not include the content to encyclopedia articles, for these are often original scholarly works, sometimes even signed by the author; encyclopedia articles, therefore, must be documented if used. In a particular field of study, common knowledge may have a wider application; it may include, for example, certain basic assumptions regarding textual criticism in Biblical studies, even though the same assumptions would not be common knowledge in another field.

For a particular assignment, of course, a professor may allow students to omit documentation, especially if the assignment specifies the sources to be used. Those students, however, must not assume that such allowance permits them to ignore, on other occasions, the standard practices of documentation in writing and scholarship.

Every writer should keep in mind that the name on a paper, whether submitted to a professor in a course or to an editor for

publication, is an implicit claim to full authorship of the contents. Readers have the right to expect the author to point out any exceptions to full authorship.

- ✓ Papers are to express the original thoughts of the student. If a topic for a paper has been discussed fully among students prior to an assignment, the students should consult the instructor about writing on that particular topic.

Failure to indicate the source of ideas, expressions, phrases, or sentences constitutes plagiarism.

A student may not submit papers substantially the same in content for credit in more than one course, without specific and prior permission of all instructors concerned.

Students often have trouble distinguishing between privileged information and common knowledge. An idea may be considered common knowledge if it is encountered at least three times in separate sources during one's research into a particular subject. (Reprints of one source do not constitute separate sources.)

Students should realize that an act of plagiarism may include some degree of premeditation or may be the result of carelessness or ignorance of acceptable forms of citation. The act is plagiarism in any case and is a violation of the honor code. Students, therefore, must be conscious of their responsibilities as scholars under the honor system, to learn to discern what is included in plagiarism as well as in other breaches of the honor code, and must know and practice the specifications for citations in scholarly work.

- ✓ Plagiarism is the verbal, written, graphic, or three-dimensional presentation of borrowed material without citing its source. A student must cite a source for quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed ideas, models, information, or organization of material. If the student is not sure whether something requires citation, the student should see the professor involved. Each department is responsible for developing a definition of plagiarism. The maximum penalty for a first instance of academic dishonesty is failure in the course; for a second, expulsion from the College. Plagiarized work is filed in the office of the vice president for academic affairs.

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- ✓ The academic counterpart of the bank embezzler or the manufacturer who mislabels his products is the plagiarist: the student or scholar who leads the reader to believe that the text is the original work of the writer when it is not. If it could be assumed that the distinction between plagiarism and the honest use of sources is perfectly clear in everyone's mind, there would be no need for the explanation that follows; merely the warning with which this definition concludes would be enough. However, it is apparent that sometimes students will draw the suspicion of guilt upon themselves (and, indeed, are guilty) simply because they are not aware of the illegitimacy of certain kinds of "borrowing" and of the procedures for correctly identifying materials not gained through independent research and reflection.

The spectrum is wide. At one end, there is a word-for-word copying of another's writing without enclosing the copied passage in quotation marks and identifying it in a footnote, both of which are necessary. (This includes, of course, the copying of all or any part of another student's paper.) It hardly seems possible that anyone of college age or more could do that without clear intent to deceive. At the other end, there is the almost casual use of a particularly apt term, which one has come across in reading and which so admirably expresses one's opinion that one is tempted to make it personal property.

Between these poles, there are many different degrees, but each may be placed roughly into two groups. Close to outright and blatant deceit—but perhaps more the result of laziness than of bad intent—is the patching together of random jottings made in the course of reading, the writer's sole contribution being the cement to hold the pieces together. Indicative of more effort and, for that reason, somewhat closer to honesty, though still dishonest, is the paraphrase, an abbreviated (and often skillfully prepared) restatement of someone else's analysis or conclusion, without acknowledgment that another person's text has been the basis for the recapitulation.

- ✓ A student turned in a paper with the following paragraph:
The characters in *Othello* are both allegorical and realistic at once. Characters like Iago and Desdemona are recognizable both as persons and at the same time devils, demigods and forces in nature. It is Shakespeare's achievement as an artist that he is

capable of creating visions of life as people live it at the same time that he is able to understand life in terms of social and cosmic symbols. In this paper I will discuss the allegorical elements in the play, the skeleton of ideas and actions with which the characters give meaning to the play.

The instructor gave the paper to the honor council, citing this paragraph as evidence of plagiarism. The instructor presented the following paragraph from Alvin Kernan's "Introduction to The Tragedy of Othello" by William Shakespeare, edited by Alvin Kernan. Copyright © 1963 by Alvin Kernan.

Here is the essence of Shakespeare's art, an ability to create immediate, full and total life as men actually live and experience it; and yet at the same time to arrange this reality so that it gives substance to and derives shape from a formal vision of all life that comprehends and reaches back from man and nature through society and history to cosmic powers that operate through all time and space. His plays are both allegorical and realistic at once; his characters both recognizable men and at the same time devils, demigods and forces in nature. I have discussed only the more allegorical elements in Othello, the skeleton of ideas and formal patterns within which the characters must necessarily be understood. But it is equally true that the exact qualities of the abstract moral value and ideas, their full reality, exist only in the characters.

The instructor delineated four examples of plagiarism:

(1) A change in wording:

STUDENT: The characters in Othello are both allegorical and realistic at once. Characters like Iago and Desdemona are recognizable both as persons and at the same time, demigods, devils and forces in nature.

KERNAN: His plays are both allegorical and realistic at once; his characters both recognizable as men and at the same time devils, demigods and forces in nature.

The instructor explained that this is plagiarism because the ideas presented in both cases are the same, with the student adding only a few of his own words to alter Kernan's original phrasing.

(2) Use of a catchy word or phrase:

STUDENT: In this paper I will discuss the allegorical elements in the play, the skeleton of ideas and actions with which the characters give meaning to the play.

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KERNAN: I have discussed only the more allegorical elements in the play, the skeleton of ideas and formal patterns within which the characters must necessarily be understood.

The instructor stated that this sentence constitutes plagiarism because the student used the catchy phrase “the skeleton of ideas.” Again, the student retains Kernan’s phrase and his ideas, changing only some of the wording.

(3) Undocumented paraphrasing:

STUDENT: It is Shakespeare’s achievement as an artist that he is capable of creating visions of life as people live it at the same time that he is able to understand life in terms of social and cosmic symbols.

KERNAN: Here is the essence of Shakespeare’s art, an ability to create immediate, full and total life as men actually live and experience it; and yet at the same time to arrange this reality so that it gives substance to and derives shape from a formal vision of all life that comprehends and reaches back from man and nature through society and history to cosmic powers that operate through all time and space.

This, the instructor said, was paraphrasing, and unless acknowledged, it is also an act of plagiarism. Students must clearly indicate each use of paraphrasing with a footnote or a reference technique suitable to the instructor.

(4) Word-for-word copying:

STUDENT:....are both allegorical and realistic at once...recognizable...devils, demigods and forces in nature...the allegorical elements in the play, the skeleton of ideas. . . .

KERNAN:..are both allegorical and realistic at once . . . recognizable . . .devils, demigods and forces in nature . . . the allegorical elements...the skeleton of ideas...

The instructor noted that had the student put Kernan’s words in quotation marks and properly footnoted them, there would have been no offense.

Plagiarism extends to preparation materials as well. For example, should the student forget to note on research cards the source of material and then fail to footnote the source when the paper or report is prepared, the student is still committing a plagiaristic act. Not knowing how or when to footnote is not considered a sufficient excuse.

Students are expected to follow the general rules of footnoting for each discipline. One footnote is not sufficient if additional material from the same source is included in a work. Footnotes should express the extent of ideas or expressions of others that are used. All direct quotes must be in quotation marks or in block quote format. Simply providing a footnote without using quotation marks or block quote format is a violation. For further information about footnoting, refer to *A Manual for Writers* by Kate L. Turabian or the *MLA Style Sheet*.

A general rule is when in doubt, always footnote.